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-California Focus / Thomas D. Elias-

Companies launch anti-spy campaigns

STAT

No billboards warn engineers and technicians who work in the myriad aerospace labs around California that "Loose Lips Sink Ships."

But newly intensified anti-spy campaigns spurred by last year's spate of well-publicized espionage cases bear a message similar to the old World War II slogan.

"Everyone is susceptible to recruitment by the KGB," FBI special agent David Majors told one recent seminar at Hughes Aircraft Co., the nation's leading supplier of defense electronics.

And recruiting of strategically placed Americans at companies like Hughes, TRW, Northrop and Rockwell International is a top priority of Russian intelligence agencies.

Their known successes here include former Hughes employee William Bell, who turned over top-secret radar plans since used by the Soviets, and ex-TRW worker Christopher Boyce.

"We know that there's a heavier emphasis today than ever before on stealing our technology," says Edgar Best, the Hughes security manager who last year was chief of security for the Los Angeles Olympics. "The Soviets identify up to 5,000 tasks for their agents to accomplish in the field of technology each year."

~~And~~ CIA official McLellan DuBois recently reported that "one-third of their requirements are satisfied annually."

Most Soviet intelligence successes are the result of KGB contacts among employees at defense contractors like those concentrated in several key California areas.

To plug the leaks, some companies are now staging campaigns featuring everything from movies, lectures and slide shows to slogans on posters, company phone directories and the coasters employees place beneath coffee mugs.

"Our message has to go to 75,000 employees," said Best. "Our first priority is to convince our people of the danger."

Like Hughes, TRW and Northrop now run formal programs to educate employees about spying dangers. Some other large defense contractors, most notably Lockheed and Rockwell International, have no formal programs, but routinely brief employees with top-secret clearances on security.

Hughes' Best maintains that's not enough.

"We try to instill the idea in our people that they're doing something of genuine interest to the East Bloc even if it's not classified or it seems minute," he said. "Much of what the Soviets accomplish comes from getting non-classified information."

No matter how low on the corporate totem pole he may be, any employee of a defense contractor can represent a potential leak, DuBois said.

Boyce, for example, was a message clerk at TRW.

To prevent recruitment of its employees, Hughes has set up some of the strictest rules ever imposed in American industry. On paper, they sound straight from George Orwell's "1984."

Employees must report any contacts they have with citizens of Warsaw Pact nations, no matter how innocent they seem.

And first-line managers are under orders to report any major lifestyle changes among their employees, from divorce to depression to sudden infusions of money and luxuries.

"When somebody befriends one of our employees or offers to help them with money problems, it might very well be for ulterior motives," said Best.

Observed the FBI's Majors, "We often hear that a person is too nice to be a spy. But that's his business. He's trained to be agreeable, to disarm you and to say what you want to hear."

The Hughes program even teaches patriotism along with anti-spy techniques.

"Our people may feel there's no real difference between America and the Soviet Union, they're both big countries with nuclear weapons," Best said. "We have to bring people to them who know first-hand what it is to be a defector, what a nightmare it is and how unglamorous."

But so far, the campaigns have apparently made little dent in the consciousness of executives or rank-and-file workers.

"The only thing I've noticed is that they've cut back on the number of security clearances," said one TRW engineer.

At Hughes, a top corporate executive said "The new security program is something we've heard about, but it hasn't been visible to me beyond a little literature placed on my desk overnight."

No campaign can assume that it will increase the safety of American secrets, especially since, as FBI agent Fred Miller told one reporter, "There's definitely an increase in the number of Americans willing to sell information."

Says Best, "It's just like the Olympics were for security people. If we succeed, no one will notice. But if we have even one failure, you can bet the whole world will know."

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